

The Attitude of Solidarity

The attitude of "solidarity" cannot be dissociated from that of "opposition," for each is necessary to the understanding of the other. The attitude of solidarity is, so to speak, the natural consequence of the fact that human beings live and act together; it is the attitude of a community, in which the common good properly conditions and

initiates participation, and participation in turn properly serves the common good, fosters it, and furthers its realization. "Solidarity" means a constant readiness to accept and to realize one's share in the community because of one's membership within that particular community. In accepting the attitude of solidarity man does what he is supposed to do not only because of his membership in the group, but because he has the "benefit of the whole" in view: he does it for the "common good." The awareness of the common good makes him look beyond his own share; and this intentional reference allows him to realize essentially his own share. Indeed, to some extent, solidarity prevents trespass upon other people's obligations and duties, and seizing things belonging to others. In this sense solidarity is in harmony with the principle of participation, which from the objective and "material" point of view indicates the presence of "parts" in the communal structure of human acting and being. The attitude of solidarity means respect for all parts that are the share of every member of the community. To take over a part of the duties and obligations that are not mine is intrinsically contrary to participation and to the essence of the community.

Nevertheless, there are situations in social and individual life that make it necessary. In such a situation, to keep strictly to one's own share would mean, in fact, lack of solidarity. Such a possibility indicates that in the attitude of solidarity the reference to the common good must always remain alive: it must dominate to the extent that it allows one to know when it is necessary to take over more than one's usual share in acting and responsibility. That acute sense of the needs of the community which distinguishes the attitude of solidarity emphasizes above any particularism or divisions the mutual complementariness between the members of the solidaristic community: every member of a community has to be ready to "complement" by his action what is done by other members of the community. This mutual complementariness is in a way an intrinsic element in the very nature of participation, which we are now interpreting subjectively, that is, as the dynamic factor of the person, and not just objectively, as the "parts" that are the share of every participant in the communal structure of acting and being. It is why we see in the attitude of solidarity an intrinsic manifestation of participation as a feature of the person. It is this attitude that allows man to find the fulfillment of himself in complementing others.